

• *Jesus silences his critics by word and deed*

• *Miracles are proofs of Jesus' faith*

• *Miracles illustrate the ease with which he can forgive sins*

• *Miracles show his lordship over creation*

• *Miracles are sovereign foretastes of heaven*

1. We see a woman whose religion had brought her no relief

• *Legalism and hypocrisy*

2. Consider what she needed.

3. How did she get this liberating word and touch from Jesus?

Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on a Saturday, that is, on the Sabbath day^{□1}. Among the worshippers there was a woman who had been attacked by an evil spirit and, as a result, had been a cripple for eighteen years^{□2}. Jesus heals her^{□3} but the synagogue leader criticises the people for coming to be healed on a Sabbath^{□4}. Jesus replies to the man^{□5}. The critics are silenced but the common people are happy^{□6}.

There seem to be thirty-five miracle stories in the gospels. Twenty-six of them are healing miracles or exorcisms.^a Jesus has supreme authority, because He was (and still is, in heaven) a man of perfect faith. The miracles are proofs of His faith. They are also illustrations of spiritual experiences. The ease of Jesus' miracles illustrates the ease with which He can forgive^{□1}. The power He has over the body is a sign of the power He has over our relationship to God. Deafness is parallel to spiritual deafness, blindness to spiritual blindness, and so on. The miracles are indications of Jesus' lordship over creation, over Satan, over disease and over death. They are foretastes of heaven, and often foretastes of the resurrection body. They are examples of what He might in His sovereignty do for us. God has total freedom in when and how He gives miracles. He is sovereign in His giving faith for miracles. Sometimes – and the story in Luke 13:10–17 seems to be an example – He works a miracle without being asked. He does it just because He wants to! Miracles cannot be 'switched on' just when we like; but our God still works sovereignly to minister to men and women in need.

1. We see **a woman whose religion had brought her no relief**. Jesus calls her a 'daughter of Abraham' which must mean that she was a true woman of faith. Can a person be truly saved and yet be oppressed by Satan for so long? It seems so. A believer can be 'delivered' in that she is truly in the kingdom of God, and yet still be vulnerable to Satanic attack. Satan was not planning to let go of this 'daughter of Abraham' easily.

Eighteen years! Why had she got no help for eighteen years? One does not like to say it – but it was the church she went to! The synagogue leader did not like this woman being healed at all! He was legalistic. Jesus is very severe with him, as he is with religious people who do not like it when others get blessed by Jesus. 'You hypocrite!' He says.

2. **Consider what she needed.** She needed a liberating word from Jesus^{□1} and a liberating touch from Jesus^{□2}. She got both. He spoke to her and He touched her.

3. **How then did she come to get this liberating word and liberating touch from Jesus?** She was faithful in attending a meeting where Jesus was known to be present. She had been crippled for many years. One might have thought that a woman in her condition had good reason not to be in the synagogue. If anyone had an excuse for staying at home, it was her. But she was obviously diligent in getting to be where Jesus was ministering.

□1 13:10
 □2 13:11
 □3 13:12-13
 □4 13:14
 □5 13:15-16
 □6 13:17

□1 see Mark 2:1-17

□1 13:12
 □2 13:13

4. Surprisingly, church leaders often do not like people being healed by Jesus!

• *Strict rules about small things*

• *Legalism gets very hypocritical*

• *The legalistic Sabbath lovers missed what Jesus was doing – but the ordinary people experienced His miracles!*

4. It is surprising, perhaps, to discover that **church leaders often do not like people being healed by Jesus!** One would think the synagogue leader would be delighted to have a woman who had been distressed for eighteen years, now healed and released. But the church leader is angry about the whole business. He held to a legalistic view of the Sabbath. It was a peculiar idea of keeping a holy day – to forbid God from doing any good thing on it! Legalism gets itself into peculiar contradictions at times.

Religious people like to have quite strict rules about quite small things. 'Holy days' were part of the Mosaic law and religious leaders loved this part of the law, and even exaggerated it.

However, their strictness was more for others than themselves. If they had an animal that was distressed on the Sabbath, they would do something about it. They were happy for an animal to be cared for but not a human being! It just shows that legalism gets very hypocritical.

Ordinary people are often full of common sense whereas legalistic church leaders can make very foolish decisions at times. The leader of the synagogue would rather not have God do anything miraculous on a Saturday! But theological theory is of no value if it does not bring spiritual experience. The ordinary people were more practical. The legalistic Sabbath-lovers missed what Jesus was doing. Meanwhile quite ordinary people experienced Jesus' miracles!

Note

a. Healing an official's son (John 4:46–54); delivering a man with an unclean spirit (Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:33–37); healing Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14–15; Mark 1:29–31); cleansing a leper (Matthew 8:2–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–15); healing a paralytic (Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26); the sick man at Bethesda (John 5:1–15); the man with a withered hand (Matthew 12:9–13; Mark 3:1–5; Luke 6:6–11); the centurion's son (Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10); the widow's son (Luke 7:11–17); the blind and dumb spirit (Matthew 12:22–32; Luke 11:14–23); the demoniacs at Gadara (Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39); the woman with a haemorrhage (Matthew 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48); Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:22–43; Luke 8:41–56); two blind men (Matthew 9:27–31); a dumb spirit (Matthew 9:32–34); the Syrophenician woman's child (Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30); the deaf man with a speech impediment (Mark 7:31–37); the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–26); the demon in a boy (Matthew 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–42); a man born blind (John 9:1–7); a woman infirm for eighteen years (Luke 13:10–17); a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1–6); Lazarus (John 11:1–44); ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19); Blind Bartimaeus (Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43; Malchus' ear (Luke 22:49–51). In addition there are at least two places where it says that large numbers of people were healed by Jesus: (i) Matthew 8:16–17; Mark 1:32–34; Luke 4:40–41; (ii) Luke 5: 14–16.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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